

Wainscott Windmill  
Village of Wainscott  
Town of East Hampton  
Suffolk County  
New York

HAER No. NY-144

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Wainscott Windmill

NY-144

Location: Village of Wainscott  
Town of East Hampton  
Suffolk County, New York

Date of Construction: 1813

Present Owner: The Georgica Association  
Wainscott, New York

Significance: The Wainscott Windmill is one of eleven  
surviving 18th and early-19th century  
wind-powered gristmills on Long Island.  
This is one of three surviving windmills  
with a fantail.

Historian: Robert Hefner

Transmitted by: Kevin Murphy, Historian HAER, April 1984

## I. History of the Windmill

This windmill was built on Mill Hill in Southampton in 1813 to replace a mill which had burned down the year before.<sup>1</sup> Mill Hill, which was also the site of other windmills, is now bounded by Windmill Lane and Hill Streets in the Village of Southampton. The new mill was owned by Jeremiah Jagger and Joshua Sayre.<sup>2</sup> They sold the mill to Captain David Chapman, whose heirs sold it to James Parker and James Sayre in 1841.<sup>3</sup> Captain Barney Green then purchased the mill and moved it to another site on Mill Hill, next to the Mill Hill Windmill, which he also owned.<sup>4</sup> The Mill Hill Windmill is now at Southampton College. Captain Green had one miller, Richard Dunster, operating both mills. According to tradition, one mill ground wheat and the other ground corn.<sup>5</sup>

The windmill was moved to Wainscott in the 1850's where it operated for about half a century.<sup>6</sup> It was likely moved in 1858, for in that year Cornelius Conklin applied to the Town trustees for permission to set a windmill on common land in Wainscott.<sup>7</sup> Conklin did not own the mill for long, as by August 1859 he had sold his Wainscott mill to Isaac King.<sup>8</sup> The mill is listed in the 1860 Census of Industry; in that year it grounded 5000 bushels of grain and produced \$5500 worth of flour and feed.<sup>9</sup> These figures are the same as those for the other East Hampton windmills listed, the Hook Mill and Gardiner Mill. In 1873 Isaac King advertised for sale his farm of 12 acres and "A good Wind Mill, with plenty of good business for the mill from the surrounding country."<sup>10</sup> In 1892 the windmill was again offered for sale, for \$550, this time it was described as "An old-fashioned Wind Flour & Feed Mill."<sup>11</sup> The owner advertising the mill was Nathaniel Dominy VII, who at that time also owned the Hook Windmill and had owned the Pantigo Windmill. The mill was last operated by Osborne, Hand & Company and the last miller was George Grimshaw.<sup>12</sup> By 1912 the windmill had become the Wainscott Public Library, with sails and fantail intact.<sup>13</sup>

Lathrop Brown purchased the mill in 1922 and moved it to Montauk where it became part of a cottage he was building on the cliffs just west of the lighthouse.<sup>14</sup> In 1942 the Lathrop Brown property was acquired by the U.S. Government. Mr. Brown gave the windmill to the Georgica Association, a private residential association in Wainscott, which had the windmill moved and set up on the Association grounds.<sup>15</sup>

## II. Structure and Machinery

Much of the machinery of the mill has been removed and much of the structure replaced since it ceased operating about 1910. It is possible that the millstones and much of the missing machinery was removed when the windmill became the Wainscott library. It is probable that Lathrop Brown altered the mill when he moved it to Montauk to be part of his cottage. He likely removed the roller bearing, cap rack and cap centering devices to allow a firm

anchoring of the cap to the mill tower. When the windmill was moved back to Wainscott in 1943, the mill tower was transported in four sections, of two bays each. When these were being erected in Wainscott, one section fell apart.<sup>16</sup> The mill tower has numerous replaced structural members. The mill also has all new floors and the cap framing timbers are all replaced.

The mill was winded by a fantail. Photographs of the mill when the fantail was intact indicate that the components were the same as those of the fantails of the Beebe and Hayground windmills. The only difference is that the Wainscott Mill has a starwheel of four sockets instead of eight. The fanstage and starwheel are still in place, but the shaft and pinion are missing. The cap rack has been removed, but a section of it is stored in the mill. Because the curb has been altered and the cap frame timbers are new, there is no evidence in the mill to indicate whether the fantail was original or installed at a later date. The fantail could date from the building of the windmill, in 1813, but there is no certain documentation of a fantail on an eastern Long Island windmill before 1820 when the Beebe Windmill was built.

The machinery which remains in the mill is the windshaft, brake wheel, wallower, great spur wheel, main vertical shaft, stone crane and regulators. The windshaft may date from when the mill was operated. Iron fillets are set longitudinally into the neck of the shaft. There is also an iron bane set in the neck bearing block mounted on the weather beam. The compass-arm brake wheel is made of three layers of rear cants bolted together. On the wheel is written in pencil "March 20 1868." The wallower is unlike that found in any of the other windmills; it is a clasp-arm spur gear with beveled cogs. The stone crane remains in place in the mill; the worm is stamped "J Conklin." The stone spindles with regulators attached also remain in the mill. One sign of the mill's comparatively late date of construction, 1813, is the absence of a center post; the main vertical shaft bears on a bridge beam at the second floor. This practice is also found in the 1820 Beebe Windmill.

Footnotes:

- 1) William S. Pelletreau, ed., Records of the Town of Southampton, Long Island, N.Y. (Sag Harbor, N.Y.: John H. Hunt, 1910) Vol. VI, p. 228.
- 2) Ibid.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Charles A. Jagger, "The Old Mill Hill Mill and Other Old Mills," The Southampton Magazine, Summer 1912, p. 15.
- 5) Ibid.
- 6) Pelletreau, Records of the Town of Southampton, p. 15.
- 7) H.D. Sleight, ed., Journal of the Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of East Hampton Town 1845-1870 (Riverhead, N.Y.: Harry Lee Publishing Co., 1927) p. 192.
- 8) Ibid., p. 201.
- 9) United States Census Office, 8th Census, Census of Industry, Suffolk County, 1860.
- 10) Sag Harbor Express, Vol. 14, No. 36, 20 March 1873.
- 11) East Hampton Star, Vol. 7, No. 11, 26 February 1892.
- 12) Photograph of Waincott Windmill, ca. 1918, East Hampton Free Library, manuscript no. CD 17.; East Hampton Star, Vol. 24, No. 9, 29 January 1909.
- 13) Jagger, "The Old Mill Hill Mill", p. 16.
- 14) East Hampton Star, Vol. 37, No. 44, 15 September 1922.
- 15) George Wilson Pierson, The Bringing of the Mill (1942-1943), (New Haven: privately printed, 1962).
- 16) Ibid.